

Medications and the environment: what you should know

Are medications present in the environment?

Yes. They have been found in waterways and wastewater throughout the United States. Trace amounts of medications have also been found in fish.



How do medications get into the waterways and water supply?

Through direct disposal, by landfill garbage or by flushing down sinks or toilets, and through human and animal excretion of drugs.

Do wastewater treatment plants remove all medications?

No. These plants remove biodegradable pollutants, but they cannot remove all synthetic pollutants or medications.

How is returned medication disposed of?

The waste is properly disposed of at regulated facilities in the U.S.

The Medication Take-Back program is available at these participating pharmacies. For hours of operation, please call each location at the number listed below.

Burien Medical Center Pharmacy
140 S.W. 146th Street, Burien 206-901-2405

Everett Medical Center Pharmacy
2930 Maple Street, Everett 425-261-1560

Olympia Medical Center Pharmacy
700 Lilly Road NE, Olympia 360-923-7600

Eastside Hospital and Specialty Center Pharmacy
2700 152nd Avenue NE, Redmond 425-883-5940

Renton Medical Center Pharmacy
275 Bronson Way NE, Renton 425-235-2855

Silverdale Medical Center Pharmacy
10452 Siverdale Way NW, Silverdale 360-307-7410

Riverfront Medical Center Pharmacy
322 W. North River Drive, Spokane 509-324-6464

For more information, please call 1-800-RECYCLE.

This program is made possible by:
Group Health Cooperative
Group Health Community Foundation
Interagency Resource for Achieving Cooperation (IRAC)
Local Hazardous Waste Management Program
in King County
Snohomish County Solid Waste Management Division
Public Health–Seattle & King County
Northwest Product Stewardship Council
Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation
Pacific NW Pollution Prevention Resource Center
Puget Sound Action Team
Washington State Department of Social and Health
Services–Aging and Disability Services Administration
Washington State Department of Ecology
Washington Board of Pharmacy (Project Advisor)

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Safely dispose of unwanted medications at your Group Health pharmacy



Protect your family

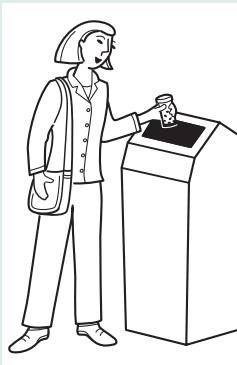
Fact: Medication mistakes at home are the most common cause of accidental poisoning.

Protect the environment

Fact: Flushing or throwing away medications puts our waterways and marine life at risk.

What to do: 3 steps to safety

1. Gather your unwanted medications and other approved items (see list). Leave items in the original containers. Mark out any personal information if you wish.
2. Bring items to a participating Group Health pharmacy.
3. Deposit items into the medication disposal unit.

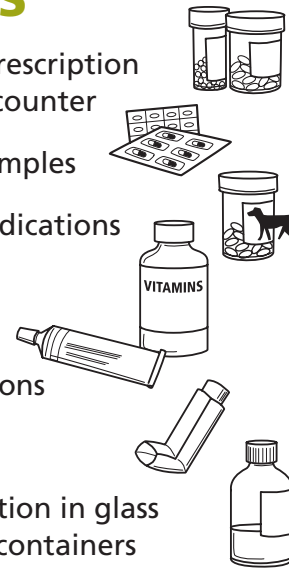


Cleaning out your medicine cabinet will help avoid mistakes.

What items can you return for safe disposal?

Return **YES**

- Medication: prescription and over-the-counter
- Medication samples
- Veterinary medications
- Vitamins
- Medicated ointments/lotions
- Inhalers
- Liquid medication in glass or leak-proof containers



Do not return **NO**

- Needles
- Thermometers
- IV bags
- Bloody or infectious waste
- Personal care products
- Controlled substances
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Empty containers
- Business waste



Why dispose of unwanted medications this way: 3 great reasons

1. Your home is safer.

Protect children and the elderly from the most common cause of accidental poisoning.*

Storing unwanted medications puts everyone in your home at risk.



2. When you return your medications for disposal, you are protecting local waters and marine life.



3. Medications will be disposed of in the most environmentally safe manner. No medications will be re-sold or re-used.

*Unintentional Injury Data, CDC, 2004